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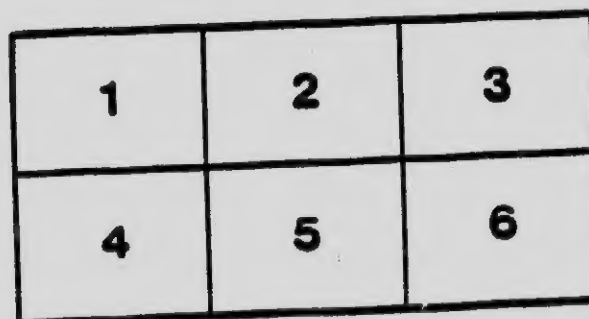
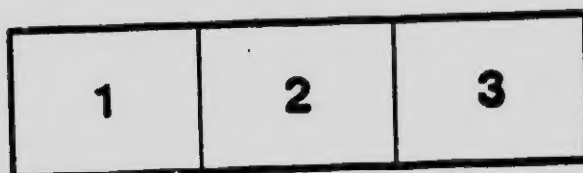
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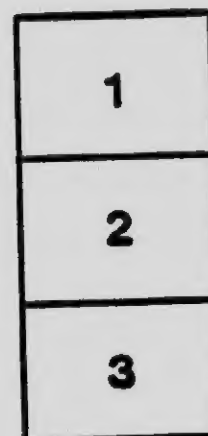
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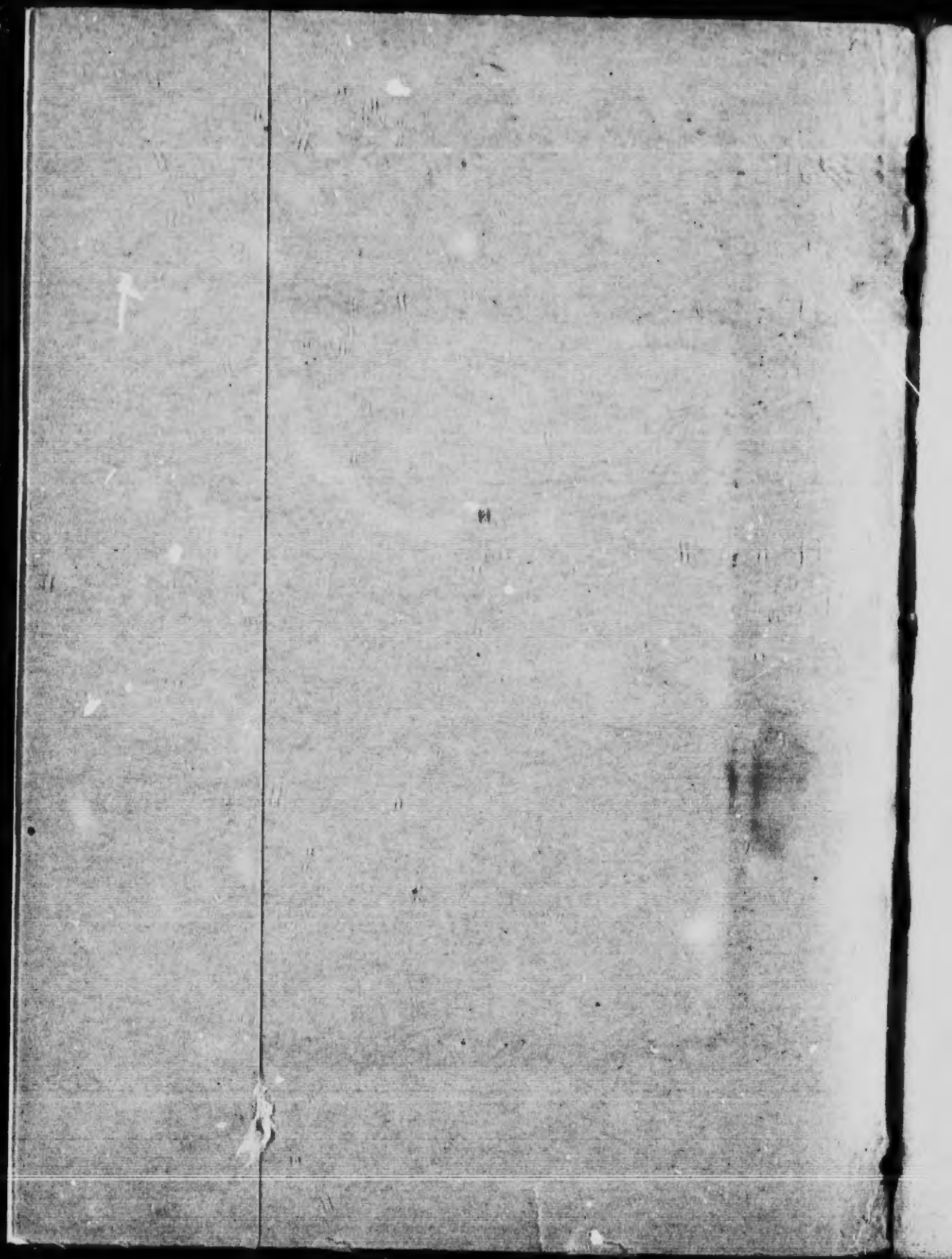




THE RECALL OF LOVE



RALPH CONNOR

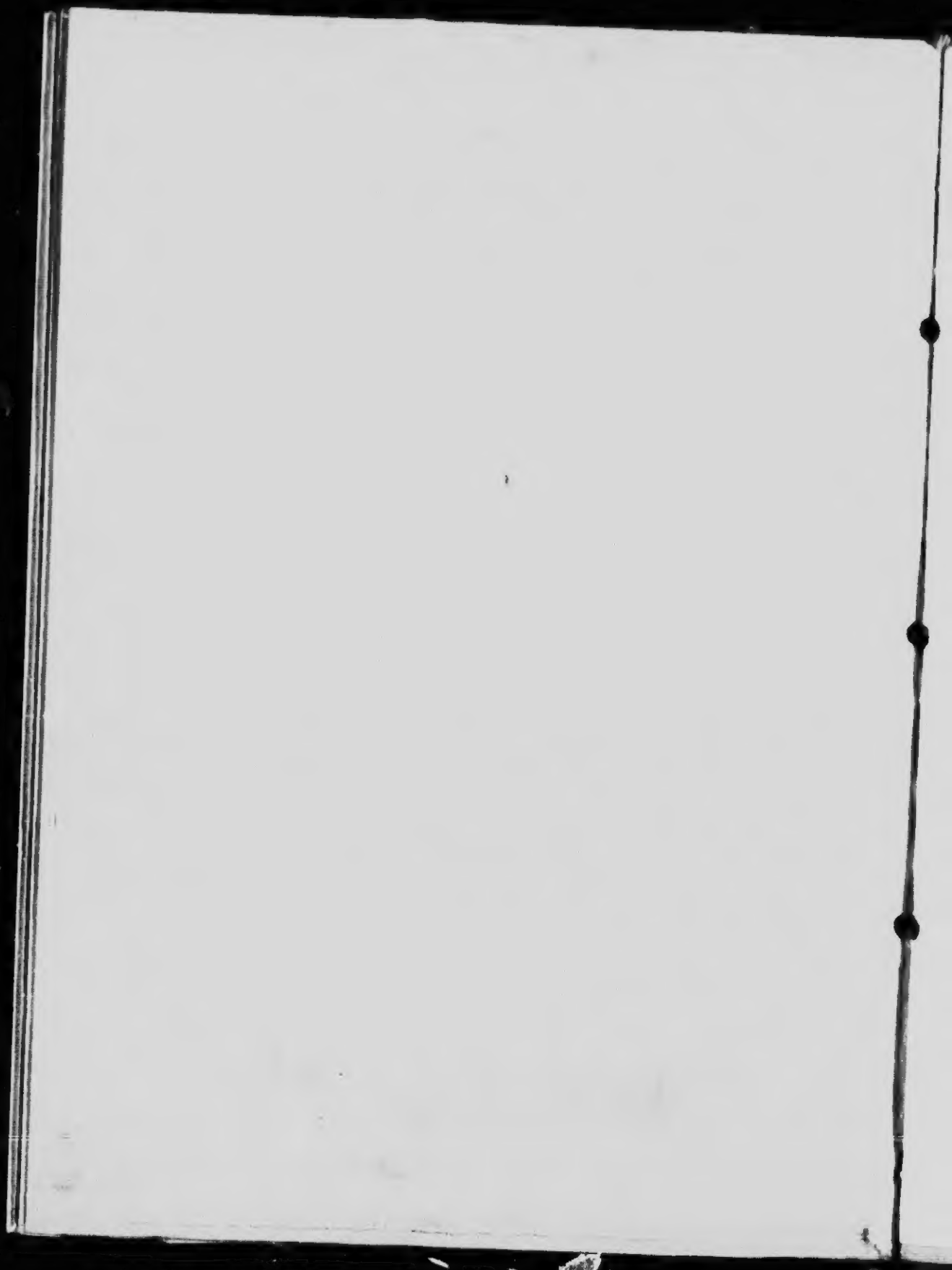


Laura J. Craig

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THE RECALL OF LOVE





There is nothing to see. The tomb is empty".

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THE · RECALL OF · LOVE

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TELL PETER." These words, straight from the heart of Him, Who, fresh from his experience of mortal infirmity, knew how to feel for a man dishonoured and broken by sudden weakness, sounded forth the recall to life, **THE RECALL OF LOVE.**

The story of Peter is not the most beautiful of the tales that gather about the Man of Galilee, but it is the most precious of them all, for it is a story

The Recall of Love

of a man who fell, but, falling, rose again. There are a thousand ways of falling; only one of rising again.

Those three nights and two days glared in Peter's mind through all his after-years as one long hideous dream. Its features stood out, clear-cut, indelible; that calm Figure, calm and majestic in spite of the unaccustomed, outrageous bonds; the malignant faces ringing Him round; the rabble crew crowding about the fire; and then that girl's face, impudent, gay, triumphant, flashing out in the firelight the sudden challenge that struck him with swift terror so that, ere he knew, he had stammered out his first fatal denial. But clearer than all, vivid and penetrating,

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remained that look of pain and love that pierced him to the heart and drove him forth into the night.

Bewildered and dazed with the sharp agony of that stabbing glance of love, he stumbled down a lonely lane, and in a back alley, writhing in pain as each successive wave of memory flooded his soul, he passed the long night until the dread dawn drove him into some darker hiding.

But neither shame nor fear could hold him in his hiding while his Lord was being done to death; so through the day he followed the crowd, safe hidden in its swirling eddies; watched, impotent with rage and terror while

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they frothed their hate against the Man who had through the past months proved His love by deeds of kindness upon their bodies and by words of healing upon their souls; watched and waited with faint lingering hope for that display of power that would set Him free; watched in vain.

Did he follow to Calvary? His letters, with their clarion call to noble suffering and their appeal to the agonies of the Christ, reveal the eye-witness of those last dread pangs of the Cross. Not with the jeering crowd, not with that gallant little company close to the Cross, braving the fury that raged about them, but from behind the rocks of Calvary, peeping fearfully, he watched the



Those days glared in Peter's mind
through all his after-years

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horrible scene. In his own hands he felt the drive of the nails, upon his own brow the tearing thorns, and in his own side the spear-thrust—felt, but dared not utter his cry. Now lying prone, now gazing again in horror, now rocking in agony, he suffered with his Lord till that last great cry relieved him too.

Through that mysterious darkness he lay waiting for the end of all things, but the end was not yet. With quick, disciplined tread, the soldiers march from the ground; subdued and terrified, the rabble and their leaders slink back to the city, but still Peter waits. From his place behind the rocks he watches, coveting with how deep a longing a place in that poor, pathetic little pro-

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The Recall of Love

cession that bears to the stranger's tomb the limp and pallid body of his Lord, watches till all is made safe, watches till all have gone their ways, and he is left alone.

Whither now? Ah, whither indeed? What place in all the world is left for the man who has dishonoured his name, broken his faith, denied his Lord? The city? It is overflowing with the jubilant slayers of his Master. The upper room? Not there. Ah! not there. There is no place for a traitor in that band. Peter's sin, like all men's sin, has cut him off from his dearest comrades. Is there no place for such as he? Yes, there is one. Outside the city wall where they cast their refuse, out to

The Recall of Love

Gehenna, the place of uncleanness and of everlasting burning, out to that dread valley — thither a man, burdened with uncleanness and longing for the fires of purging, may go. On that rugged ridge, illumined by baleful fires that never sleep, Peter spends his night. As its weary hours drag their slow length along, a question haunts him with terrible persistence, "Why should I, cut off from God and from my comrades, any longer live? What is left for me? Why should I live to meet the morrow?" So, spent, distraught and tempted to his doom, he watches the night draw toward morning. Suddenly through the grey light he sees a figure flying with hurrying steps as if pursued by ten thousand demons, and making

The Recall of Love

toward his hiding. Horror-stricken, he watches the hunted man fasten a rope round the bough of an overhanging tree, with trembling hands adjust it about his neck, then hurl himself headlong, tree and all, down upon the rocks below. Gazing in fascinated terror, Peter beholds in the glare of the burning fires the distorted face and the mangled body of his fellow-disciple.

"Alas! poor Judas! You waited for no look of piercing love when you went forth into the night." A new terror shakes Peter's soul, hunts him from that valley of cursing and drives him up the stair to the upper room where, abject and trembling, he stands, waiting the opening of the door.



Behind the rocks of Calvary
he watched the scene

The Recall of Love

Who opened to him? Was it the beloved disciple? He was ever quick at opening doors. And did he say, "No, Peter, there is no place here for cowards?" Ah! no, not that, but with hands outstretched, "Come in, Peter, come in, we need you sorely here." And did Peter take his place with never a word? We know he did not. Peter had done with cowardice and lying. With relentless self-abasement, he stood and told them all, with sobs and tears and heart-wrung groanings, his sin and shame, ending with this bitter cry, "And on me cursing He cast a look as if He loved me still. Oh, could I but tell Him my sorrow and my love. But this may never be." With humble compassion they took him to their hearts, too

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conscious of the coward in themselves to be hard with the man who, through cowardice, had denied and suffered. And then through the morning light sounded clear and sweet the sacred trumpets from the Temple courts near by, announcing that the Sabbath Day had come.

The Sabbath Day! What mockery was this? The Great Feast-Day was upon them. What fiend's humour was this? What Sabbath of rest and holy joy for them while their Lord, the Son of God, lay dead in Joseph's tomb. Surely no more exquisite turn of misery was left them now. Dazed and dumb and huddled together, they listened through the long hours to the successive

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chantings of the priests, to the clear-sounding trumpets and the clashing cymbals that lead the people in their jubilant songs upon this high and holy day of national memorial and of national triumph. Alas for them! With their Lord all their high hope for Israel lay dead.

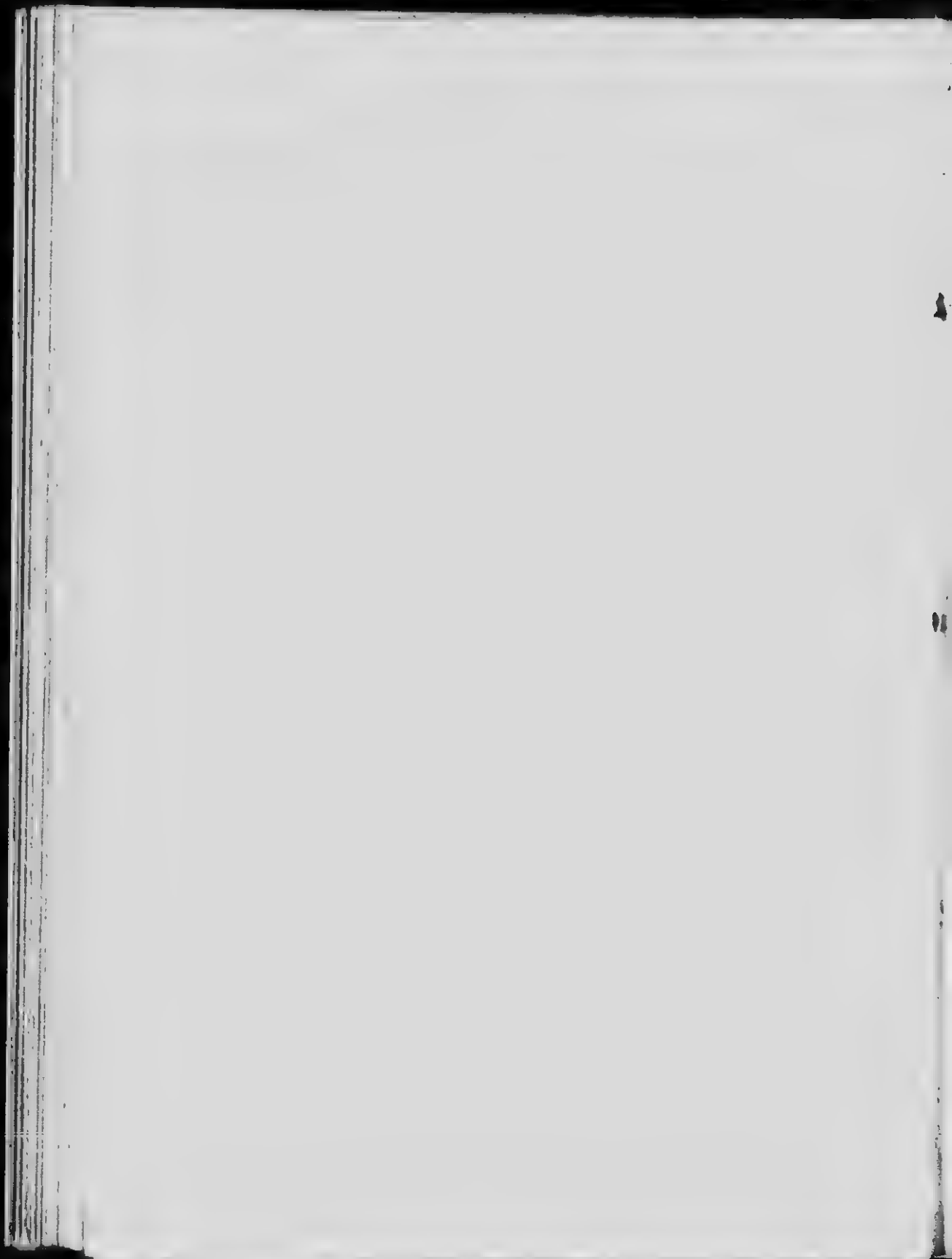
Night falls. The last glad trumpet note has ceased, the sounds of the street die down. The city lies in slumber, while they, stupid with misery and despair, wait for the morning. The men doze off into horrid dreams, only to wake startled by the old pain, and to doze again. But the women do not sleep. Their finer spirits rise victorious over the sluggish flesh, and,

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besides, they have a business on hand. Long ere the dawn grows grey they are alert and moving, signalling each other in the dim light. Softly they open the door, steal down the stair. Only Peter of the men sees and understands. In other days he would have been at their side, but to-day this is not for him. It is the women's work, for their hands are gentle, their touch tender, their hearts true. It is for them to bathe and anoint and garb that precious body for its final rest. It is not for him, unclean and coward as he is. So he waits behind, and over the sad hours of the past days and nights his heart makes weary pilgrimage, dwelling with fresh grief on each incident of shame.



He stood and told them all his sin and shame.



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But hark! There is a sound of running feet! Along the street and up the stairs they come. The door bursts open, and the women with white faces and staring eyes fling forth their news, their glad, terrifying, glorious, unbelievable news. The tomb is empty! There is a vision of angels! He is alive!

"God of Abraham! God of the living, can it be?"

Peter is down the stairs and up the street, running hard, after him John. Nearing the sepulchre, John shoots to the front. What slowed Peter's feet? Not age, but a sudden shock of memory. The man whom he is running to

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see is the Man he has denied. Well indeed may John run swiftly to the meeting; he has never failed his Lord.

But they may save their breath. There is nothing to see. The tomb is empty, rifled of its dead. Riled? What then of these folded robes? These proclaim no haste. Greatly wondering, but unbelieving, they return to their company. It is after all only a silly woman's tale. The ghostly light of the dawn working with imaginations dis-tempered and distraught with grief explains it all.

Upon them as they stand in eager excited talk, the door opens again, and

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a woman stands among them. It is the Magdalene, calm and controlled, but with eyes and face aglow with the exultant glory of the Resurrection vision. "He is alive!" and her voice thrills through their hearts. "He is alive! I have seen Him with these eyes! I have held Him by the feet! He knew me! He called me by my name!" She pauses in rapture. "By my name!—and He gave me a message to you all."

They crowd hungrily upon her. "And He gave me a message to—" ah! she sees him shrinking in the corner—"to you Peter."

"To me?" says Peter, faintly.

"Yes, to you, Peter."

"No, no, not to me. Not to me."

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"Yes, He said distinctly, 'Tell Peter,'" and she gives her message.

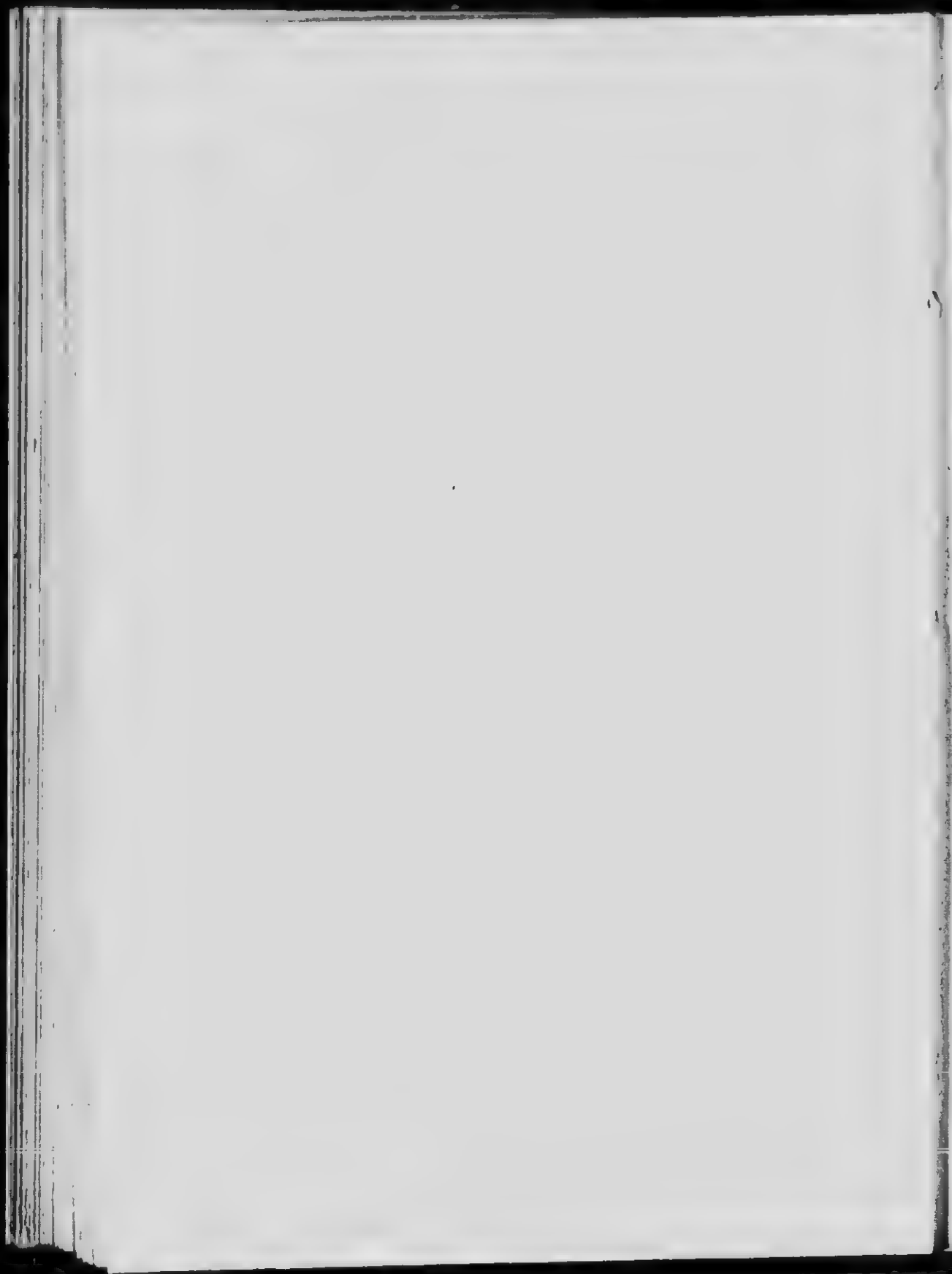
But Peter is gone. Down the stairs again and through the streets. Why does he stumble so? The morning light is good now. Ah, the tears, rapturous, raining tears make the walking bad, and he is in haste to find his Lord. With one swift leap, his heart has passed from despair to faith, knowing that such a message can come only from his own loved Master.

Whither is he going now? Out of the city gate, but not to Calvary, not to the tomb. That is no place for a living man. Out to the old trysting spot on Olivet goes Peter, his eyes weeping,



He is alive! I have seen Him!"





The Recall of Love

but his heart tingling with joy, up to the garden where they were wont to meet. At the gate he reverently pauses, then softly passes into the olive shade.

"Ah!" he says, with swift remembrance of the hour, "this is the spot where I slept. Shall I ever sleep again?" He draws slowly to where under the trees the grass is sodden and beaten down. "Here, here it was He lay." Down upon the trampled turf he casts himself, his face pressed hard upon the sod, his fingers clutching the grass while anew he sobs forth his penitence. "Oh, to see Him once again, to tell Him of my love." His sobs grow quiet, and he becomes aware in the stillness of a Presence over him,

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while he waits awe-stricken, scarce breathing, that he may hear if He speak. There they had their meeting, the sinner and the Saviour.

"Somebody came and lifted me,
Out of my sin and misery,
Somebody came, oh, who could it be,
Who could it be but Jesus?"

Was it a moment, or was it an hour? Peter never knew; but when he came to himself he was treading the air on his way back to the city. They who met him wondered at his face. "I have seen Him," he cried to them all. "I have seen him again; and HE IS JUST THE SAME! HE IS JUST THE SAME!" Through the company like

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fire in a forest ran the word, "Simon has seen the Lord." All the while among them, Peter moved with a look on his face, tender and subdued as of a little child, and to all who met him his one word was, "I have seen Him; HE IS JUST THE SAME."

Tell the world that Jesus is the same. The shock of the Cross has left His great life unbroken. The chill of the tomb has not touched His heart.

Tell the sick of the world He is the same, his sympathy as quick, His help as ready as of old.

Tell the outcast He is the same, His

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fine chivalry making Him their champion as before.

Tell those who mourn their dead He is just the same, His word as mighty to revive.

Tell the whole world, burdened with its sin and its sorrow, that Jesus, though victor of the tomb, through the glorious risen Lord, is the same; as much a man as ever, as strong and tender as when He walked with the joyous crowds by the sunny waters of Galilee: **JESUS IS THE SAME.**

The day was done; the world's great day. How sweet was the night, how grateful, after their long nights of

The Recall of Love

agony, its rest! He had been with them all, and, leaving them His peace, had passed out of their sight. They were alone again, yet not alone, for they knew He was alive, and, therefore, near. The mystic spell of that Presence was still upon them, and the wonder of His victory over death still filled their souls.

"He is the same," mused Peter to his friend, "and yet, He is not the same."

"Where lies the change?"

"That I cannot tell. His look, His tone, His bearing when He spoke to me the word of pardon—ah! I know, it is that He is a King."

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"Said He nought to you of your —?"

"Of my sin? Nay, one word only, as I poured it forth, 'Speak no longer of your sin; it lies buried in my tomb.' Then it was He spoke most like a King, as if *He had won the right* to bestow His pardon where He would."

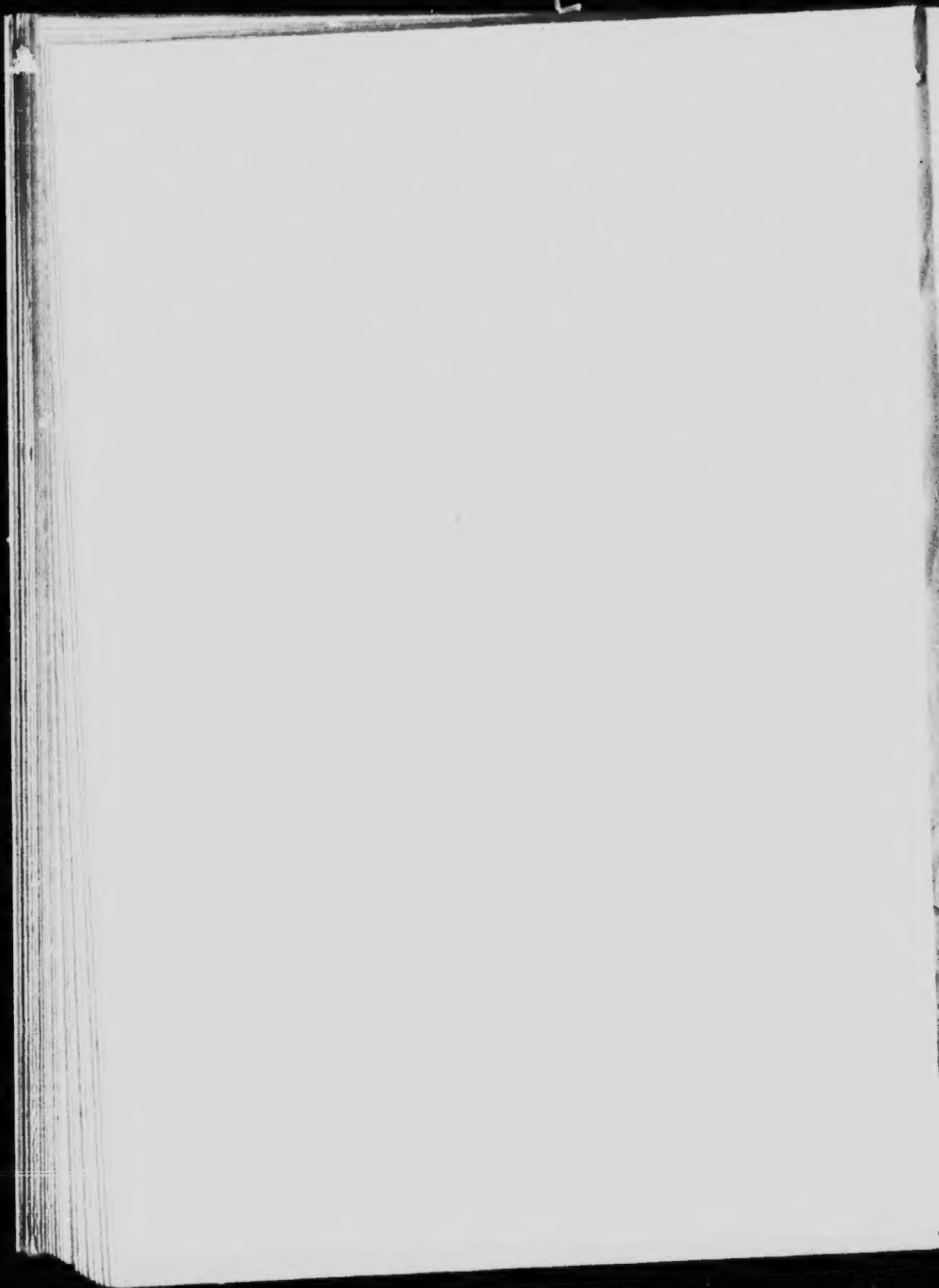
Thenceforth that became another of Peter's great announcements: **IN JESUS' GRAVE LIES MAN'S SIN.**

Oh, wondrous grave to hold a world's sin! Oh, glorious pronouncement to men oppressed with sin! It is your right to bury it in Jesus' grave.

One other teaching came to Peter,



"This is the Spot where I slept.
Shall I ever sleep again?"



The Recall of Love

but not on that day. With the passing years it grew upon him, and ever grew more precious, till in old age he fed his heart upon it.

At last came a day when they led him forth to meet his doom. And when they would have laid him on his Cross, one word alone, and with a calm smile, he spoke, "Suffer my head to lie where lay His feet." And so they crucified him, unafraid, for in his ears sounded the music of that first glad message, "Tell Peter." And he knew that **THROUGH JESUS' GRAVE LAY THE PATH TO LIFE.**

Oh, glorious word of "lively hope" for men appointed to death:

The Recall of Love

**Through Jesus' grave lies the path
to life.**

**Oh, vanquished grave of Jesus whose
chill could work no change upon His
heart!**

**Oh, deep, deep grave of Jesus whose
depths can hide a whole world's sin!**

**Oh, glorious grave of Jesus through
whose gloom lies the immortal path-
way to Immortal Life!**

**"Tell Peter," He said; and to Peter
and the rest, "Tell all the world."
IT IS THE RECALL OF LOVE.**

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